

The 1893 Cowra Truss Bridge

location Following replacement of the 1893 McDonald truss bridge, one of its spans was erected in Edgell Park (now Bryant Park) in 1990 on the western side (south bank) of the Lachlan River at Cowra, New South Wales.

owner Cowra Shire Council

type **Historic Engineering Marker**

location The plaque has been removed.

plaque text

Cowra Bridge Truss

This span was one of the three of the Cowra Bridge built across the Lachlan River in 1893 to a design by J A McDonald. It was the first composite timber/iron truss in New South Wales and was the largest of its type in Australia. It carried the busy north-south inland road traffic for 93 years. Its preservation was a joint project of the Cowra Shire Council and the University of New South Wales during 1989–90.

Dedicated by The Institution of Engineers, Australia, 1990.

John A McDonald came from England. He joined the Department of Public Works, NSW in 1879 and from 1889 to 1893 was Engineer for Bridges. McDonald made a significant contribution to bridge design in NSW. His achievements include redesign in 1886 of the standard PWD truss to produce the "McDonald Truss"; design of all the lattice girder road bridges from 1884 to 1893; design c. 1884 of a series of sliding bridges at Lismore, Coopernook and Erina; design of early bascule and lift bridges such as over the Darling River at Bourke in 1883. McDonald died in 1933.



1893 Cowra bridge truss (demolished)

The truss span in Bryant Park was demolished in 1999 because it had become unsafe. Accordingly, in October 2002 an interpretive sign was installed at the site, commemorating the three road bridges over the Lachlan River at Cowra. The sign includes images of the McCallum and McDonald bridges, the notes about John McDonald reproduced above and the text that appears on the following page.

The Bridges over the Lachlan River Cowra

The first bridge constructed at this site was an American all-timber McCallum truss bridge of three spans. It existed from 1868 until replaced by a bridge designed by John A McDonald.



1868 McCallum truss bridge with new McDonald bridge in the background



1893 McDonald truss bridge

The McDonald bridge was the first to use a composite timber/iron truss in New South Wales and the largest of its type in Australia. The bridge carried the busy north-south inland road traffic for 93 years until 1986, when it was replaced.

In 1990 one of the McDonald truss spans that had been erected in Bryant Park, was awarded an Historic Engineering Marker plaque by The Institution of Engineers, Australia. However, it was demolished in 1999 because it had become unsafe.

The existing seven span bridge comprises two prestressed concrete, continuous box girders. It was designed by the then Department of Main Roads and opened in 1986.



The 1986 (existing) bridge

Cowra Shire Council and The Institution of Engineers, Australia. 2002